

SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society

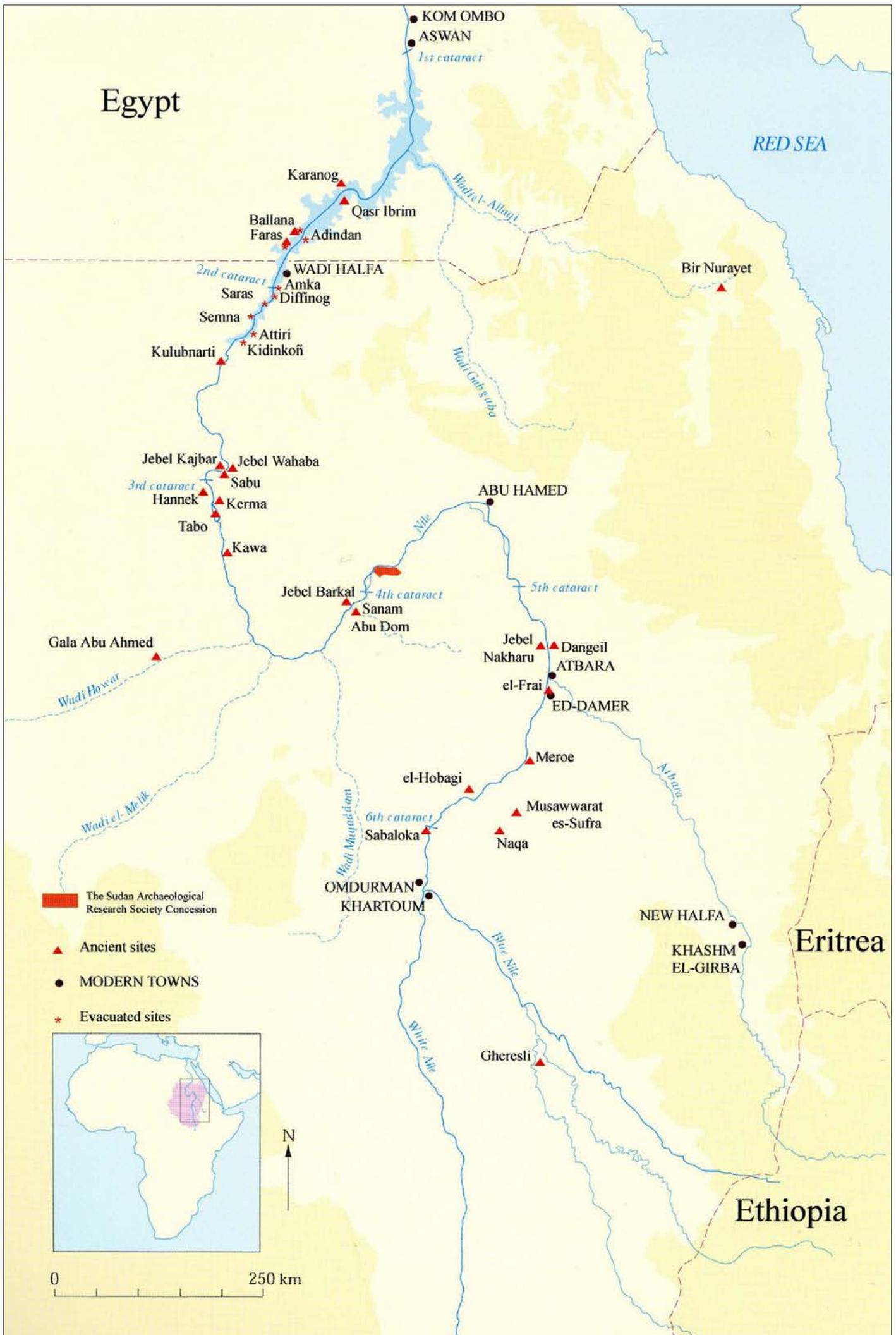


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Front cover: Beja man by the well at Bir Vario, Eastern Desert (photo K. Pluskota).



Apedemak and Dionysos. Further remarks on the “cult of the grape” in Kush

Andrea Manzo

Recent contributions have pointed out the presence of Dionysiac iconographic elements in the decoration of Late Meroitic or Post-Meroitic bronze vessels. In fact, among the bronze bowls from el-Hobagi, one is characterized by a frieze of dancing satyrs in front of an amphora on a tripod (Lenoble 1999, 177-178, HBG VI/1/105, fig. 25). As noted by Patrice Lenoble (2004, 334-335), a similar iconographic programme can be found on a 3rd-4th century AD ceramic bottle from a tomb in Karanog showing four satyrs, three dancing in front of a double-handled vessel on a stand, and one playing a flute (Woolley and Randall-McIver 1910, 54-55, 133, 262, pl. 45, 73; Török 1976, 99; Wenig 1978, 286, no. 231; see also Hofmann 1995, 2847). The dancing Satyrs represent a pattern evocative of a symbolic value of wine which is not isolated in the iconographic corpus of el-Hobagi. Actually, a second bowl is decorated with four Hathoric heads and a vine frieze (Lenoble 1999, 172, HBG VI/1/7, fig. 2), and a third bowl is decorated with a vine frieze (Lenoble 1999, 173-174, HBG VI/1/107, fig. 11).

Thus, these finds seem to confirm and to extend to the Middle Nile region the hypothesis of the existence of a “cult of the grape” suggested for Post-Meroitic Lower Nubia by W. Y. Adams (1977, 418). Moreover, Lenoble (1999, 174-178) suggested that, given the identification of Osiris with Dionysos in Greco-Roman Egypt (Clerc and Leclant 1994a, 108-109), the use of Dionysiac iconography in Post-Meroitic times is not casual, but these elements were intentionally selected for their ideological meaning and linked to the Osiriatic symbolism, already present in Meroitic funerary religion (Abdelgadir M. Abdalla 1982, 92-94; Yellin 1995, 2869-2870, 2884-2888).

This fact might also be related to the use of wine for funerary rituals suggested by the representation of wine amphorae on some Meroitic offering tables (Yellin 1982, 228-229, 1998, 2881, 2883; Millet 1984b, 189; see also Harting 1984, Abb. 13). Actually, in the iconography of the bottle from Karanog and the bowl from el-Hobagi, the amphora is represented on a tripod or stand which is very similar to the stand or tripod often represented in association with elongated double-handled vessels also on several offering tables from the area around Meroe and dating to the 1st-2nd centuries BC or from Meroitic Nubian sites and dating to the late 1st-3rd centuries AD (Yellin 1995, 2882-2883). These vessels might be identified with wine amphorae also because their shape does not recall any known Kushite vessel (see Adams 1986, 413-420, 435-458; Shinnie

and Bradley 1981, 97-132; Williams 1991, 27-91) and is very similar to the shape of the several types of Egyptian and Mediterranean wine amphorae imported into the Kushite kingdom (Hofmann 1991; 1993). Thus, not only can the use of wine together with water and milk for funerary offerings not be excluded, but I think that it can be considered highly probable in the light of the typology of vessels represented on the offering tables.

According to Lenoble (2004, 338), the presence of Dionysiac elements is also evident in the iconographic characteristics of some Meroitic *ba* statues, dating from the 2nd to 3rd century AD (Wenig 1978, 88), and in Meroitic ceramic decoration. Dealing with the pottery, perhaps the reference is to the frontal heads with protruding ears and a crescent on the forehead (Adams 1986, vol. I, 239-240, figs 122 and 135-137; Wenig 1978, 291, no. 238), which might be representations of heads of satyrs, and to the vine-leaf decoration (Adams 1986, vol. I, 239-243, figs 122, 132, 139-141, 146 and 242; Wenig 1978, 95-98, 276-281, no. 219-224, 301-302, no. 256-258; Williams 1991, 33-34, 47, 64-67; Shinnie and Bradley 1980, figs 44-46) widespread in the painted Meroitic pottery dating from the 2nd century BC as well as in the painted Lower Nubian Post-Meroitic pottery. Moreover, on a fragmentary pottery box from a Meroitic temple at Qasr Ibrim (Driskel *et al.* 1989, 21, note 1, pl. VIII, c), a complete satyr holding grapes is represented which is similar to the previously described cases from Karanog and el-Hobagi.

As was rightly noted, all these elements point to a dating of the “cult of the grape” earlier than originally suggested by Adams (1977, 362), going back earlier than Late Meroitic times (Millet 1984a, 114). Later, the Osiriatic funerary ideology with syncretistic Dionysiac elements borrowed from the Mediterranean Greco-Roman world might have been adopted by Post-Meroitic aristocrats and, according to Lenoble (1999, 174-175, 178; 2004, 337-338), might suggest a certain degree of continuity in the Post-Meroitic ideology with the Late Meroitic funerary symbolism.

As matter of fact, it should be remarked that the Dionysiac elements seem to be widespread in Meroitic culture. To the above listed elements and to the small objects decorated with Dionysiac iconographies or elements listed in recent articles dealing with this topic (see e.g. Scholz 1996; Sackho-Autissier 2002), several other cases can be added.

Actually, the vine and grape frieze was not limited to ceramic decoration but it was used also for architectural decoration. The first forecourt of the pyramid chapel of queen Amanitore (Beg. N. 1) in the Royal Cemetery at Meroe was decorated with representations of wine jars, ladles, grapes, and vines (Hinkel 1986, 104; Yellin 1990, 368). Another example of the use of vine and grape frieze is a faience offering table from the palace of Wad ben Naqa possibly dating to the time of Queen Amanishakheto (Vercoutter 1962, 289, fig. 22) and a similar fragment was discovered in pyramid Beg.N.2 possibly of King Amanikhabale (Dunham

1957, 103-106, fig. 71). It is noteworthy that the presence of decoration with vine and grapes in funerary and religious contexts can be related to the importance given in the Kushite religion to Osiris (see Abdelgadir M. Abdalla 1982, 92-94; Leclant 1981, 86; Millet 1984a, 120), who was assimilated with Dionysos, as previously mentioned.

However, the use of purely Dionysiac iconographies can be noticed in other architectural decorations. One of the glazed faience cylinders discovered by Garstang at Meroe, variously dated from the 1st (Török 1988, 133-134) to the 3rd century AD (Wenig 1978, 94), which were possibly elements of a pillar, was decorated with two enigmatic figures, a dancing satyr, and two other dancing figures, most likely representing an orgiastic scene of the Dionysiac cult (Trigger 1993, 396; see also Hofmann 1989, 122-123).

Moreover, a relief on the southern wall of an almost completely destroyed Meroitic temple at Duanib-Wadi el Banat tentatively dated to the time of Natakamani and Amanitore (Török 1997b, 504, note 516) shows two symmetrical mythical creatures in the middle between the god Bes and Satyrs facing each other (Hofmann 1995, 2848, fig. 12; Lepsius 1849-1859, V, pl. 68f; Naville 1897-1913, V, 345-346). As rightly pointed out, the link between the god Bes and the Dionysiac satyr is an important aspect of the spread of Dionysiac elements in Kush (Séguenny 1984, 151; Sackho-Autissier 2002). This is well illustrated by the popularity of the iconography of the satyr's head noted above in pottery decoration and which was also used as decorative pattern on seals as, for example, in the case of the clay sealings from a Meroitic tomb at Sedeinga (Schiff Giorgini 1966, 250-251, pl. XXIX, c 14, c 24-25, c 30-31; see also Hofmann 1995, 2847).

It is evident that all these iconographic and ideological elements arrived in the Kingdom of Kush through the intensive contacts with the Mediterranean cultural milieu, most likely through Egypt. These contacts are also archaeologically detectable in the presence of imported Mediterranean objects which were sometimes decorated with Dionysiac iconographic elements or decorative patterns.

Some imported funerary furniture of the royal Meroitic tombs at Begrawiya North and at Napata are remarkable from this point of view. The pyramid Beg.N.5 of Prince Arikankharer, son of Natakamani, yielded two bronze heads of Dionysos *mitrephoros* which might have been part of two statues, two lamps or might have been decorations of furniture (Chamoux 1960; Török 1988, 137, n. 124; Dunham 1957, 127, fig. 82, pl. LXVIII/A-D, XLIX/A). In the same pyramid of Prince Arikankharer, a mosaic glass inlay most likely from Alexandria representing the head of Dionysos or a person related to the Dionysiac cult and dating to the 1st century BC-1st century AD, was discovered (Török 1988, 137, n. 120; Dunham 1957, 127, fig. 83, pl. LXIX/E).

Some other implements discovered in the Kushite royal tombs were decorated with Dionysiac iconographic elements, like the vine leaves on the handles of a bronze basin (see

Dunham 1963, 89, fig. 67j) and represented on a faience bowl discovered in pyramid of King Natakamani, Beg.N.22 (see Dunham 1957, 119, fig. 78; Török 1988, 133, n. 101) or the Dionysiac masks of a satyr or Silenos decorating handles attached to buckets and jugs from pyramid Beg.N.6 of Queen Amanishakheto (Török 1988, n. 76, 130-131; Dunham 1957, 188, fig. 135d, 129, fig. 144d), or from pyramid Beg.W.458, dating to the 1st century AD (Török 1988, 142, n. 179; Dunham 1963, 188, fig. 135d). Given the importance of musical instruments such as the *xyrinx*, the *kitbara*, and the *aulos* in Dionysiac practices (see e.g. Restani 1989), the fragmentary ivory *aulos* discovered in the Beg.N.6 of Queen Amanishakheto (Dunham 1957, 106-111, fig. 73-74; Dixon and Waghsmann 1964) could be related to the other Dionysiac elements.

On the basis of their typology, it can be reasonably assumed that the use of these implements was not exclusively linked to the funerary ceremonies and context. Most likely this kind of furniture was also used in daily life by Kushite aristocrats and princes, as suggested, for example, by the handle of a table implement decorated with the head of a satyr or Silenus (Donadoni 1993, 107, 113; 1994, 59; Sist 2000, 254, tav. XIX, fig. 11), and by a vessel decorated with theatrical masks (Donadoni 1993, 107; Demichelis 1999, 120; Sist 2000, 254, tav. XIX, fig. 10) discovered in Natakamani's palace at Jebel Barkal, and by other fragments of *auloi* from the Royal City at Meroe (Southgate 1915).

In Kushite contexts going back to the same phases of the objects related to Dionysiac iconography, several fragments of imported wine amphorae dating from the late 3rd century BC to the end of the mid-4th century AD have been discovered (Hofmann 1991; 1993, 221-223). These finds suggest that at that time wine from several regions of the Western and Eastern Mediterranean (Hofmann 1991) and from Egypt (Hofmann 1993) was consumed in Nubia and the Middle Nile regions. The consumption of wine, imported mainly but not exclusively from Egypt, continued in Lower Nubia up to Late Meroitic times, and into Post-Meroitic and Christian times (Adams 1966, 277-282; 1986, 525-538, 545, 553-568, 571-583; Hofmann 1993, 226-227, 229-230).

Several bronze and silver vessels imported from the Mediterranean, which were discovered in the Kushite royal tombs in the North and South cemeteries at Meroe and at Barkal, and in the Southern and Western elite cemeteries at Meroe, might be considered as evidence of the consumption of wine. Moreover, in a funerary context, their presence might even be related to the Nubian tradition of the funerary banquets (Yellin 1995, 2879). Actually, the strainers, the bowls, the drinking cups, the beakers, the buckets, the pitchers, the basins, and the jugs (see Table 1) might have been used for the preparation of wine for consumption, and the consumption itself because the usual purpose of these vessels is to mix, to make warm or cool, and to serve wine (see e.g. Hostetter 1989; Dunbabin 1995).



Table 1. Metal Mediterranean vessels from the Kushite royal and princely tombs at Meroe and Jebel Barkal possibly related to the consumption of wine.

| Type of vessel | References |
|----------------|--|
| Strainers | Török 1988 , n. 1 A, 119, n. 7, 120, n. 13, 121; Dunham 1957 , 40, fig. 18, 29, fig. 8, pl. LII A; 1963 , 74, fig. 54/a, 118-127, fig. 88-94. |
| Bowls | Török 1988 , n. 2, 3, 9, 10, 119-120, n. 12, 121, n. 20-21, 121-122, n. 53, 127, n. 57-59, 127, n. 77-80, 82, 86, 131, n. 89, 91, 132, n. 133, 138, n. 136, 139, n. 174, 142, n. 185-187, 143; Dunham 1957 , 40, fig. 18, pl. LII G, 29, fig. 81, fig. 33, pl. LII d, fig. 109-111, 217-129, fig. 95-96, 1963, 24, fig. 18, 74, fig. 53/d-e, 222, fig. N/22, N/25-26, 235, fig. O/7, 91, fig. 71, a-c, 118, fig. 90, b, d-f, h-l, 235, fig. N/1, 95, figs 73, e-f, 159, fig. 115 c, 159, fig. 116 d, 135, fig. 99 g, 177, fig. 129 e-g, fig. 130 b, 152-153, fig. 111, 159-164, fig. 116-118, 103-108, fig. 78-80, 171-176, fig. 124-127, 359-360, fig. 190-191, 21-24, fig. 16-17, 26-28, fig. 19, 110-112, fig. 82-83, fig. O, 10. |
| Cups | Török 1988 , n. 8, 120, n. 16-17, 121, n. 28, 123, n. 81, 87, 131, n. 102, 133, n. 130, 138, n. 193, 144, n. 198, 145; Dunham 1957 , 78, fig. 50, pl. LVII I, 117, fig. 78, pl. LVII/N, 149, fig. 97, pl. LVIII/E, 151, fig. 97, pl. LIV/A-B, 1963 , 74, fig. 53/c, 76, fig. 57/e-f, 118, fig. 91 g, I, 106, pl. LIII/A-D, 143-151, fig. 105-110. |
| Beakers | Török 1988 , n. 69, 129, n. 71-72, 130, n. 90-91, 93, 132, n. 164, 141; Dunham 1957 , 59-62, fig. 32-33; 1963 , 235, fig. O/2, 240, fig. O/4, 280, fig. O/3, 95, fig. 73, c-d, fig. 74, 143, fig. 107 e. |
| Buckets | Török 1988 , n. 11, 120-121, n. 19, 121, n. 29, 123, n. 51, 126, n. 54, 56, 127, n. 76, 130-131, n. 84, 131, n. 88, 97, 132; Dunham 1957 , 78, fig. 50, pl. LVII K; 1963 , 74, fig. 54/b, 76, fig. 57/a, 91, fig. 70 d, f, 118, fig. 91 d, 235, fig. O/1b, 106, fig. 79 S. |
| Pitchers | Török 1988 , n. 49-50, 126, n. 55, n. 95, 132, n. 135, 139, n. 181, 143, n. 184, 143; Dunham 1957 , 185-189, fig. 122-123; 1963 , 89, fig. 67 e-f, 91, fig. 70 e, 106, fig. 79 q, 159, fig. 116 c, 265, fig. P/4, 177, fig. 129 c. |
| Basins | Török 1988 , n. 52-53, 126-127, n. 99, 132, n. 188, 143, n. 192, 144, n. 203, 145; Dunham 1957 , 149, fig. 97, pl. LIV/C, D, fig. 33, pl. LII d; 1963 , 89, fig. 67 j, fig. 68 a, 248, fig. 165/1, 177, fig. 130 c, 194, fig. 142 b, fig. N 25, 177-188, fig. 128-134, 426, fig. 235, 435, fig. 237, fig. O, 11. |
| Jugs | Török 1988 , n. 4, 120, n. 14, 121, n. 47, 126, n. 179, 142, n. 183, 143, n. 208, 146; Dunham 1957 , 29, fig. 8, pl. LII B, 99, fig. 67; 1963 , 310, fig. P/1, 188, fig. 135 d, 246, fig. P/2-3, 129, fig. 144 d. |

From the chronological point of view, on the basis of these data, the earliest examples of types of metal vessels possibly used for wine consumption in the Meroe cemeteries have been recorded both in the South and Western cemeteries and in the Begrawiya South cemetery in contexts dating to the 3rd century BC, such as the pyramid of King Arkamaniqo, of the first half of the 3rd century BC. The earliest wine amphorae might date to the 2nd century BC in the Begrawiya cemetery (pyramid Beg.N.8), to the late 2nd century BC-early 1st century BC at Barkal (pyramid Bar.5) and to the 2nd century BC in the Western cemetery at Meroe (pyramids Beg.W.21 and Beg.W.162). Both wine amphorae and metal vessels possibly used for wine consumption disappear from these cemeteries in the 3rd-4th centuries AD.

Moreover, a use related to wine consumption might be suggested also for at least some of the stone drinking cups, the glass bowls, goblets and beakers or the fine pottery or faience bowls, beakers, craters and cups discovered in the same funerary contexts (see Table 2).

The presence of objects possibly related to wine consumption is not limited to the cemeteries of Meroe and Barkal. A faience cup has been found in the Argin cemetery (Török 1988, n. 213, 147; Wenig 1978, n. 218). Late 1st-early 2nd century AD faience beakers or cups (Török 1988, n. 211, 146; Woolley and Randall-MacIver 1910, pl. 39), an early 2nd century AD bronze pitcher (Török 1988, n. 214, 147; Wenig 1978, n. 199) and glass bowls dating from the 2nd to the 4th century AD (Török 1988, n. 217-218, 147, n.

Table 2. Other vessels from the Kushite royal and princely tombs at Meroe and Jebel Barkal possibly relate to the consumption of wine.

| Type of vessel | References |
|--|---|
| Stone drinking cups | Török 1988 , n. 46, 126; Dunham 1957 , 99, fig. 67. |
| Glass bowls | Török 1988 , n. 25-26, 30, 32-37, 40-41, 43, 122-125, n. 114-117, 135; Dunham 1957 , 78, 80, fig. 50, 183, fig. 120, 87, fig. 57, fig. 59, fig. 59, 93, fig. 61, 125-127, fig. 83, 83-85, fig. 55-56, 72-74, fig. 44, 63-65, fig. 36; 1963 , 229, fig. 162/14. |
| Glass goblets and beakers | Török 1988 , n. 118-119, 136, n. 207, 146; Dunham 1957 , 125-127, fig. 83, pl. LXIX; 1963 , 199, fig. 144 c. |
| Fine pottery or faience bowls, beakers, craters and cups | Török 1988 , n. 1, 118, n. 38-39, 42, 44, 125, n. 66, 129, n. 73-74, 130, n. 100, 132-133, n. 101, 133, n. 103, 133, n. 131, 138, n. 139, 139, n. 142, 139-140, n.147-152, 140-141, n. 154-158, 141, n. 166-167, 142, n. 180, 142, n. 204, 146; Dunham 1957 , 91, fig. 61, 100, fig. 66, 109, fig. 73, 113, fig. 131, 111, fig. 73, 119, fig. 78, 166-170, fig. 109-111, 83-85, fig. 55-56, 59-62, fig. 32-33, 171-174, fig. 113-114, 175-177, fig. 116; 1963 , 383, fig. 212-215, 239, fig. 162/16, 248, fig. 165/1, 233, fig. 161/4, 159, fig. 115 a, 161, fig. 117 c, 143, fig. G/38, 127-129, fig. G/17, G/25-26, G/32, G/36-37, 140, fig. G/18, G/23, G/27, G/29-31, 143, fig. G/19, G/28, 257, fig. H/1, 194, fig. 146 d, 110-112, fig. 82-83. |

231, 148) have been discovered at Karanog. The Argin necropolis contained faience beakers or cups (Török 1988, n. 213, 147). A bronze basin dating back to the late 2nd century BC (Török 1988, n. 53, 127; Bates and Dunham 1927, 55, fig. 13, pl. XXXI 4, 5) and a bronze jug (Bates and Dunham 1927, 66, fig. 2, pl. XXXI 3 A) were discovered in a necropolis at Gamai. Two bronze basins, eleven deep bronze bowls dating to the late 2nd – 1st century BC (Török 1988, n. 53, 127; Dixon 1963, 231-232, fig. 2, pl. XLVIII-XLIX) and a bronze jug (Török 1988, n. 95, 132; Dixon 1963, 231, pl. XLIX, A21637), most likely from a necropolis, have been discovered near Sennar. The necropolis of Sedeinga contained glass bowls and goblets dating from the late 1st century BC to the mid-3rd century AD (Török 1988, n. 234, 149-150; Leclant 1975). In this exceptional case, the use and meaning of these objects might be indicated by the Osiriac (Wildung 1997a, 364-365, n. 436-437) and, in one case (Reinold 2000, 35), by the Dionysiac iconography of the decoration. In the 1st century AD, a ceramic workshop specializing in the production of small-size fine ware bowls and goblets, often decorated with friezes of vine leaves, was located in the monumental complex of Musawwarat es-Sufra (Wolf 2004, 439-440).

Thus, according to all these data, it seems that the use of wine was an important part of the style of life adopted by Kushite princes and aristocrats since the 3rd century BC. Apparently, the Dionysiac iconographic elements spread together with the use of wine. Consequently, the “cult of the grape”, according to Adam’s definition, might date from that time and not from Late Meroitic times, as previously suggested (Millet 1984a, 114). Moreover, it should be remarked that the presence of elements related to this cult is not limited to the context of popular religion (see also Onasch 1984, 139), as was suggested for later times (Millet 1984a, 114; Séguenny 1984, 151), but, on the contrary, in this earlier phase, the distribution of finds related to it suggests that it was very strong and present in aristocratic and elite contexts. This is particularly evident in the case of the architectural decorations previously described: all of them can be related to royal or aristocratic contexts.

At this point we must ask if the Dionysiac iconographic and ideological elements were simply adopted by the Kushites and coexisted with their traditional religious cults or if they became an organic part of their religious and ideological system. I think that this question can be answered by the evidence coming from the iconography of the decorative programmes of two important monuments.

The architectural complex formed by buildings M 95, M 194, and M 195 in the Royal City at Meroe was for a long time interpreted as a local variant of Roman *thermae* or baths (Garstang 1913; 1914) and later as a *nymphaeum* (Török 1976, 96-98). More recently, the sacral aim of the complex has been definitely demonstrated: it was a kind of “water sanctuary” linked to the cult of the Nile and inundation and to the ruler’s cult (Török 1997a, 71-74). Interestingly, it seems

that this sanctuary replaced the old Napatan temple of Amun at Meroe, apparently not used since the mid-3rd century BC, as the place where the New Year’s rites were performed (Török 1997a, 74; 1997b, 436-437, 503; 2004, 160-161).

The decorative programme of the first phase of use of the water sanctuary, dating to the first half or mid-3rd century BC (Török 1997a, 78), included statues of a Silenos or Satyr (Török 1997a, 81-82, n° 195-7, pl. 24, 41-43, 87-88, n° 195-45, fig. 77, see also Hofmann 1995, 2847) (Plate 1),



Plate 1. Statue of Silenos or a Satyr from the ‘water sanctuary’ in Meroe, first phase, mid-3rd century BC (photo courtesy of the School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool. Neg. nos M.150 and M.151).

and possibly Dionysos (Török 1997a, 86-87, no. 195-42, fig. 75, no. 195-43, fig. 76, no. 195-44, fig. 77) (Figure 1). Other statues represented an *aulos*-player (Török 1997 a, 79, no. 195-2, pl. 19, 23, 24) (Plate 2), a *xyrinx*-player (Török 1997a, 85, no. 195-38, pl. 33, 52) (Plate 3), and a *keitharedos* (Török 1997 a, 85-86, no. 195-39, pl. 34) (Colour plate

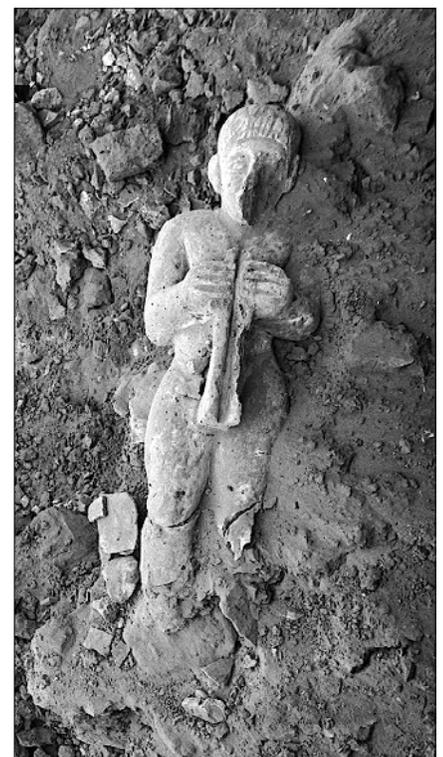


Plate 2. Statue of an aulos-player from the ‘water sanctuary’ in Meroe, first phase, mid-3rd century BC (photo courtesy of the School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool. Neg. no. M.140).

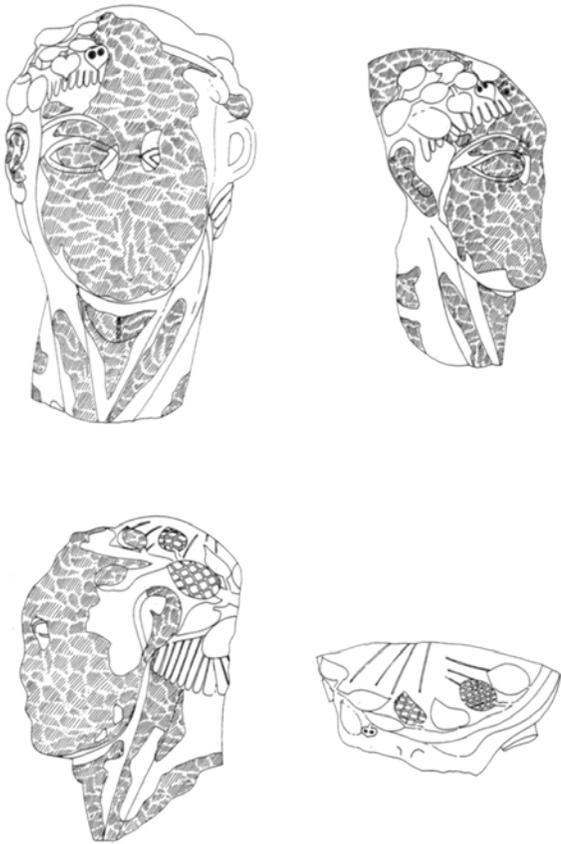


Figure 1. Statue, possibly of Dionysos, from the 'water sanctuary' in Meroe, first phase, mid-3rd century BC (after Török 1997a, 86-87, no. 195-42, fig. 75, no. 195-43, fig. 76, no. 195-44, fig. 77).

XXXVIII), and fit very well into a decorative programme inspired by Dionysiac ideas (see e.g. Restani 1989). Other fragments of statues might also show the influence of Dionysiac ideology of the Ptolemaic period (Török 1997a, 74; 1997b, 503). I think that the statues of drinking and/or reclining people (Török 1997a, 78-80, no. 195-1, 195-3, pl. 35, 36, 38, 41, 42, 48, 49) can be ascribed to this ideological programme linked to Dionysiac elements, which does not exclude also their relation to the cult of the royal ancestor, as suggested by Török (1997a, 79; 1997b, 503, 522).

Some of the statues and decorative elements of the first phase were reused also in the second phase of the building (Török 1997a, 74-75; 1997b, 503), dating to the second half of the 1st century BC-early 1st century AD (Török 1997a, 78). At that time, glazed terracotta tiles in the shape of 'nkb and s3 signs, depicting a human bust represented in Hellenistic style, perhaps to be identified with maenads (Török 1997a, 77, 1997 b, 503; Hofmann 1995, 2846-2847, see also Wenig 1978, 274, no. 215), and lions with a hmbm crown grasping a crescent most likely to be identified with the lion god Apedemak (Török 1997a, 76, 84, no. 195-31, pl. 51, see also Garstang 1913, 79, Wenig 1978, 274, no. 214) were added. Also scenes with serpents and elephants, and the bovine protomes (Török 1997a, 82, no. 195-12, 195-13, pl. 21), which are part of the decoration of the building in the second phase, are consistent with the hypothesis of an involvement of Apedemak in the ritual ceremonies performed in this complex (Török 1997a, 76; 1997b, 503).

In the second phase, an important part in the decorative programme was played by the lion protomes used as spouts (Török 1997a, 82, no. 195-12, pl. 26, 30, 33) (Plate 4), and by lion statues (Török 1997a, 84, no. 195-37, pl. 52), some of them preserved from the sculptural programme of the



Plate 3. Statue of syrinx-player from the 'water sanctuary' in Meroe, first phase, mid-3rd century BC (photo courtesy of the School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool. Neg. no. M.160).



Plate 4. A lion protome used as spout from the 'water sanctuary' in Meroe, second phase, second half of the 1st century BC-early 1st century AD (photo courtesy of the School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool. Neg. no. M.118).

first period (Török 1997a, 76-76). It is worth noting that a sandstone lion protome with a spout between the forepaws dated on stylistic grounds to the 1st century BC was discovered in the temple of Apedemak at Meroe (Wenig 1978, 257, no. 194): although in this case the use and type of the basin to which it belonged cannot be specified, the findspot might give a further confirmation that the lions of the spouts of the “water sanctuary” might also be linked to Apedemak. Actually, the spouts shaped as protomes of lions and the statues of lions are consistent not only with the cult of the Nile, as protomes of lions are widely used in Greco-Roman Egypt in offering tables related to the cult of the inundation and of Osiris (Hibbs 1985, 153-168; Török 1997a, 76), and with the cult of the lion-headed god Apedemak, whose connotation as a god of fertility is well-known (Gamer-Wallert 1983, 184-187, 210-214), but also with the Dionysiac iconography of the other statues of the second phase decorative programme, given the occurrence of lions and/or panthers in the Dionysiac *thiasos* (Brellich 1958, 911; Gasparri and Veneri 1986, 414). Moreover, it should be noted that at least one of the statues of lions used in the second phase of the “water sanctuary” was an earlier element from the first phase which continued to be used (Török 1997a, 76), and this fact confirms that the lion was felt to be an element coherent and consistent with the earlier almost purely Dionysiac decorative programme. It is also possible that since the time of this earlier phase the decorative programme of the “water sanctuary” was also felt and intended to be linked to the lion god Apedemak. A later comparison seems to confirm that the link between the lion and Dionysos was known in Nubia: the spouts of wine presses discovered in Lower Nubia and dating to the beginning of the 4th century AD are shaped as lion protomes (Adams 1966, 262; Wenig 1978, 255, no. 191), which is fully justifiable in the light of the already remarked link between the lion and the Dionysiac cult.

Thus, the decorative programme of the “water sanctuary” in Meroe suggests not only that Dionysiac elements were present since the 3rd century BC, but also that these elements were organically linked to the local lion god Apedemak, at least since the second half of the 1st century BC-early 1st century AD.

The palace of Natakamani (B 1500) at Jebel Barkal like the “water sanctuary” in Meroe was also decorated with round glazed terracotta plates (Bosticco 1988, 779-780; Donadoni 1993, 102-103; Demichelis 1999, 118; Sist 2000, 254). Most likely, this palace was built and used at the time of King Natakamani, his wife Amanitore and his son Arikankharer (Bosticco 1988, 781; Donadoni 1994, 57-59; Roccati 1996). Among the subjects represented on the tiles which were applied on the external walls are a lion with a *bmbm* crown grasping a crescent, most likely to be identified with Apedemak, female heads in a late Hellenistic style and Isiac knots (Donadoni 1993, 110; 1994, 56-57; Demichelis 1999, 118) (Colour plate XXXIX). Some of these tiles rep-

resenting maenads or fertility deities (Demichelis 1999, 120; Sist 1999, 141; 2000, 254-255, Tav. XVII-XVIII) and maenads holding raisins (Bosticco 1988, 780; Hofmann 1995, 2847; Leclant 1983, 525, fig. 64; Wenig 1984, 48; Sist 2000, 254-255, Tav. XVII, fig. 3; Welsby and Anderson 2004, 162, no. 145) (Colour plate XL) are clearly related to the Dionysiac symbolism. Also the suggested identification of some of the female persons represented on these tiles with Isis (Sist 2000, 255) is fully acceptable in this context, given her role as the wife of Osiris and the aforementioned links between Osiris and Dionysos. Note also that a link between Osiris and Apedemak has been suggested, as it was remarked that Apedemak can substitute for Osiris in the triad with Isis and Horus (Žabkar 1975, 17-19).

The similarity between the tiles from Jebel Barkal and the ones discovered in the “water sanctuary” at Meroe has already been pointed out (Bosticco 1988, 780; Sist 2000, 254). Fragments of similar tiles suggest that also at Meroe these plaques were used to decorate the walls of other buildings (Török 1997a, 58-59, 84, 98-102, fig. 70). The tiles were produced in moulds, as probably were those discovered in the “water sanctuary” of the same period of the palace of Natakamani (Donadoni 1994, 56-57; Török 1997a, 58).

Thus, also in the decorative programme of the palace of Natakamani at Jebel Barkal the Dionysiac elements were linked to the god Apedemak. Moreover, both in Meroe and Jebel Barkal the tiles decorated parts of cult or residential buildings used by royal persons, so that it can be suggested that their iconographic repertoire was not casual but linked to an ideologically meaningful programme. This might be very clearly demonstrated in the case of the palace B 1500 at Jebel Barkal for which an important function in the ceremonies was the renewal of royal power (Sist 2000, 256).

It is also noteworthy that the same scene of the lion with a *bmbm* crown grasping a crescent, most likely the royal god Apedemak, was reproduced on clay sealings produced by the royal and/or temple administration discovered inside the palace of Natakamani at Jebel Barkal (Vincentelli 1992, 113, fig. 2, 14; 2001, 74, pl. 6A, see also for discussion Török 1997b, 489). Actually, inside the palace a huge quantity of clay sealings from administrative activities was discovered (Donadoni 1993, 107; Vincentelli 1989, 129-131; 1992, 106-107; 1993, 116; 1994, 147; 2001, 71-73). It was also remarked that the sealings might have been mostly used to control the access to the contents of amphorae imported from the Roman Empire (Vincentelli 1989, 131; 1992, 107; 2001, 74).

Among the different scenes reproduced on the clay sealings, many of them showing the lion god Apedemak and in many respects unrelated to the Egyptian repertoire (Vincentelli 1989, 149; 1992, 108; 1993, 121-127, 141, fig. 2, 1994, 152; 2001, 73-74), a very interesting one represents a sitting winged Apedemak with *bmbm* crown, behind him a female figure with an hawk on her head holding a



long palm-frond, in front of him a double-handled vessel with conical base, most likely an amphora, interpreted as an offering to the lion god (Vincentelli 1989, 133-134, fig. 2.3; 1993, 122, fig. 2.3; 1994, 152, fig. 2, 1, pl. 7; 2001, 73-74) (Figure 13).

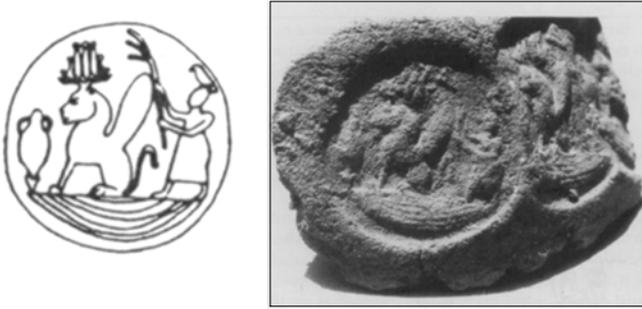


Figure 13. Impression of a seal from the Palace of Natakamani at Jebel Barkal representing a sitting winged Apedemak with hnhm crown, behind him a female figure with an hawk on her head holding a long palm-frond, in front of him a double handled vessel with conical base, most likely an amphora, mid-1st century AD (from Vincentelli 1989, 133-134, fig. 2.3; 1993, 122, fig. 2.3; 1994, 152, fig. 2.1, pl. 7).

The vessel in front of Apedemak is not similar to known types of Kushite vessels (see Adams 1986, 413-420, 435-458; Shinnie and Bradley 1981, 97-132; Williams 1991, 27-91), but, although it is impossible to suggest a precise typological identification, it is similar to Mediterranean wine and oil amphorae imported into the Kushite kingdom (Hofmann 1991; 1993). It should be noted that amphorae are present in the iconography of the aforementioned objects already related to the wine-cult or Dionysiac elements such as the bowl discovered at Hobagi, the painted bottle from Karanog, and some funerary offering tables.

The female figure with a hawk on her head is also represented with other female deities in a scene decorating a wall of the Temple of the Lion at Naqa (Gamer-Wallert 1983, 48-49, 73-74, Bl. 6 b, Tav. 32, a; see also Hintze *et al.* 1993, plan 9b), and behind an anthropomorphic lion-headed Apedemak also on a column in front of M 101, the central building of the monumental complex at Musawwarat es-Sufra (Wenig 2002, 82, fig. 2). Its identification with Amesemi, the consort of Apedemak, was recently suggested (Wildung 2004, 181), and this confirms the identification with Apedemak of the winged lion represented with Amesemi on the clay sealings from Jebel Barkal.

This female deity with hawk on the head and carrying a branch – most likely a palm leaf – recalls the figures with palms which are often represented also in the hands of the dead royal person on several funerary chapel walls at Begrawiya North dating from the late 3rd century BC to the 4th century AD (Abdelgadir M. Abdalla 1982, 63; Ali Ahmed Gasmelseed 2004; Yellin 1990, 365-366). Palm branches, most likely to be considered symbols of life, are also represented on offering tables and, on a stele, in the hands of

Isis, as well as on the south wall of the Lion Temple at Musawwarat es-Sufra (late 4th century BC) and on the north wall of the Lion Temple at Naqa (mid-1st century AD), always in the hands of Isis (Abdelgadir M. Abdalla 1982, 63, 88; Ali Ahmed Gasmelseed 2004, 283; Gamer-Wallert 1983, 153-155, Bl. 6 a, Tav. 30, b). It is noteworthy that the sharing of this attribute by Amesemi and Isis is fully consistent with the fact that both deities were consorts of Apedemak whose identification with Osiris has already been suggested (Žabkar 1975, 17-19). Although palm branches are a symbol known in Egypt since prehistoric times, they are recorded in Kush only from the late 4th century BC (Ali Ahmed Gasmelseed 2004, 282), and might have been adopted at that time from Greco-Roman Egypt, where palm branches were directly linked to Osiris (Yellin 1990, 365), who was, as already stressed, identified with Dionysos. As a matter of fact, the vegetal branch is a mystic symbol widespread in the Mediterranean cultural milieu and linked to Dionysos and other deities of fertility and renewal (Seyrig 1927, 203-210; 1944, 23-25).

Thus, also on this seal used for royal administration, whose impressions were discovered in the palace of Natakamani, the amphora and perhaps the female deity with a palm leaf might be considered as elements related to Apedemak, who is characterised as a god of fertility and of renaissance. Moreover, both these elements and especially the amphora confirm the relationship of Apedemak with Osiris and Dionysos.

It is the case, therefore, that in the decorative programmes of the “water sanctuary” in Meroe, of the Palace of Natakamani at Jebel Barkal, and in the scene on a ring bezel whose impressions were discovered among the clay sealings of the palace Natakamani at Jebel Barkal, the Dionysiac elements seem to be associated with Apedemak.

Apedemak is considered a warrior and fertility god, protector of the king and royal family (Gamer-Wallert 1983, 184-187, 210-214; Leclant 1981, 88; Millet 1984a, 118; Séguenny 1984, 150; Žabkar 1975, 13-21). According to Török (1997a, 76-77) the central place of Apedemak in the second phase (*c.* AD 50) iconographic programme of the “water sanctuary” at Meroe can be explained by his characterization as a god of fertility closely associated with kingship. Dealing with fertility, a possible syncretistic association between Apedemak and Serapis was also noted (Leclant 1973, 142-143; Gamer-Wallert 1983, 239-240), and Serapis was possibly represented also on the temple of Apedemak at Naqa built by Natakamani and Amanitore (Gamer-Wallert 1983, 75-76, 93-94, Bl. 10 a, Bl. 12, Tav. 54-56, 75-76, 79; Hofmann 1995, 2845, Abb. 21). This fact is not surprising if we consider that in Greco-Roman Egypt Serapis could replace Osiris in the traditional triad with Isis and Horus (Clerc and Leclant 1994a, 108; 1994b, 667; Darby Nock 1972, 140), as Apedemak could do in Meroe (Žabkar 1975, 17-19).

As already noted, in the “water sanctuary” at Meroe

Apedemak was associated with Dionysiac elements surviving from the first phase, but, as rightly pointed out by Török, these elements were not a simple survival, as demonstrated by the tiles with Maenads' busts newly added together with tiles representing Apedemak in the second phase. The same association was noted also in the decorative programme of the external wall of the palace of Natakamani at Jebel Barkal and in the scene on a clay sealing from the same palace representing Apedemak facing an amphora. In all these scenes the association between the two deities might be easily explained by their similar connotations as gods of fertility.

Moreover, given the connotation of Apedemak as a god of fertility and the previously noted link between Apedemak and Osiris, the assimilation between Osiris, the traditional Egyptian god of the dead, and Dionysos, already remarked on by Herodotus (Clerc and Leclant 1994a, 108-109; Gasparri and Veneri 1986, 417; Jeanmaire 1972, 359-360), undoubtedly favoured not only the establishment of a link between Apedemak and Dionysos, but also the spread of Bacchic-Dionysiac symbols into the funerary cult of the whole Nile Valley including the Kushite kingdom. Also the claimed exotic origins of Dionysos and his travels to India, Arabia, and Ethiopia (Jeanmaire 1972, 351-353, 356-362; Gasparri and Veneri 1986, 418) might have been favoured by the diffusion of his cult in several oriental regions and in the Kushite kingdom. In these regions, Dionysos was most likely identified with local deities, such as Apedemak in Kush, who was a patron of fertility like the Greek god of wine (Gasparri and Veneri 1986, 415; Jeanmaire 1972, 10-15).

If this association between Dionysos and Apedemak seems to be fully justifiable as they are both patrons of fertility, it is less easy to understand the link between Dionysos and the triumphal aspects of Apedemak and his role as patron of the king.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that in the Hellenistic Mediterranean Dionysos was at the same time a god of fertility and of conquests (Jeanmaire 1972, 351-362; Gasparri and Veneri 1986, 415, 418), and that already in Euripides' *Bacchae* he is seen as triumphant in his war against Pentheus with the result that he can establish his cult and affirm his divinity (see Esposito 1998, 12-19). Moreover, in Egypt Dionysos was also a dynastic and tutelary god for the Ptolemies, often connected by Hellenistic writers to Alexander, the conqueror of the East (Cerfaux and Toundriau 1957, 133, 148-161, 189-193; Darby Nock 1972, 134-152; Jeanmaire 1972, 350-365, 442-449; Walbank 1987, 369), as he was previously closely linked with the Macedonian royal family (O'Brien 1995, 39-42, 287-288).

As we have already noted, the occurrence of imported wine amphorae and of Mediterranean metalwork, glass, and fine pottery tableware in the Kushite elite tombs might indicate that wine consumption was a part of their style of life. In the Mediterranean regions wine consumption took place in *symposia*. These *symposia* were also ceremonies intended to show the rank of the promoters and had an important ide-

logical value. During the *symposia*, the Athenian aristocracy used precious metal vessels from the loot of the Persian wars and the Roman aristocracy used loot from its Mediterranean conquests, in order to show the international leadership that they had achieved and their military power (Fulford 1986, 153; Vickers 1985, 114-117; 1986, 138-141; 1994a, 239-240; 1994b, figs 4 and 5). Moreover, the triumphs of victorious generals in late Republican Rome were imitating the triumphs of Dionysos-Liber also in the fact that, during the triumph, public drinking ceremonies took place (Darby Nock 1972, 144, and n. 48). Given the previously noted link between Dionysos and Apedemak and their shared connotation as gods of conquest and patrons of the king, it can be asked if the same meaning was given to the use of valuable glass and metal vessels for wine consumption also in the Kushite kingdom.

The presence among the precious metal vessels discovered in the Kushite royal tombs of an exceptional drinking cup decorated with a scene of Roman imperial propaganda from pyramid Beg.N.2 of King Amanikhabale, dating to the mid-1st century AD, suggests that the exhibition and perhaps use of such an object could assume a clear ideological meaning. This cup belongs to a class of material usually considered as officially inspired works made by Roman court silversmiths and distributed as gifts on special imperial occasions (Strong 1966, 136-137). It might have been brought to Meroe as a diplomatic gift or as booty (Török 1988, 97-98, 138, n. 130; Dunham 1957, 106, pl. LIII/A-D; Wildung 1997b, 372, n. 440); in both cases it might support the hypothesis that also in the Kushite kingdom precious metalware could be used to show the international rank and/or the military power of the sovereigns.

As suggested by all the archaeological material discussed above, the spread of iconographic and ideological Dionysiac elements into the Kushite state began in the 3rd century BC. This might have happened during the phase of very intensive contacts and exchanges with Ptolemaic Egypt after the military expedition of Ptolemy II (Török 1988, 94-97; 1997b, 393-396). Interestingly, as already remarked upon (Török 1988, 96; 1997b, 420-423, 426), also in the Greek historical tradition these contacts are linked to innovations in the religious field represented by the contrast between Ergamenes and the priests of Amun. These political and religious facts might be reflected also in the new centrality which the god Apedemak and other local deities had in Kushite religion and royal ideology starting from the 3rd century BC, and in the contemporary shift of the royal cemetery from the Napata region to Meroe (Török 1997b, 420-423, 500-501). It might also be related to a conscious change in the Kushite self-image and socio-cultural identity, made evident by the use of Meroitic as the written language of official inscriptions (Priese 1997, 209).

Going back to the religious aspects, it is worth noting that, as already stressed, since the mid-3rd century BC in the royal capital the old Napatan temple of Amun was no longer



used and the New Year's ceremonies took place in the "water sanctuary" where the Dionysiac elements seem to assume, for the first time, a central role in royal Kushite ideology. Nevertheless, the above examined archaeological evidence suggests that a revival of the iconographic and ideological elements of Dionysiac type took place in the 1st century AD, when they were systematically related to and associated with the cult of Apedemak. At that time, most likely in connection with the reign of Natakamani and Amanitore, Dionysiac elements seem to play an organic, almost programmatic part in the official representation of kingship, as is clearly shown by their use in the decoration of a royal ceremonial structure, such as the "water sanctuary" at Meroe, one or more other royal building(s) at Meroe whose nature cannot be specified, a royal palace, such as the palace B 1500 at Jebel Barkal, a royal funerary chapel, such as that of pyramid of Beg.N.1 of Queen Amanitore, and in the iconography decorating a seal, i.e. an instrument of the royal or temple administration. Perhaps, also the decorative programme showing two Bes-Satyrs facing each other (Figure 2) in the temple at Duanib-Wadi el-Banat, which is tentatively dated to the time of Natakamani and Amanitore (Török 1997b, 504, note 516), should be added to this list.

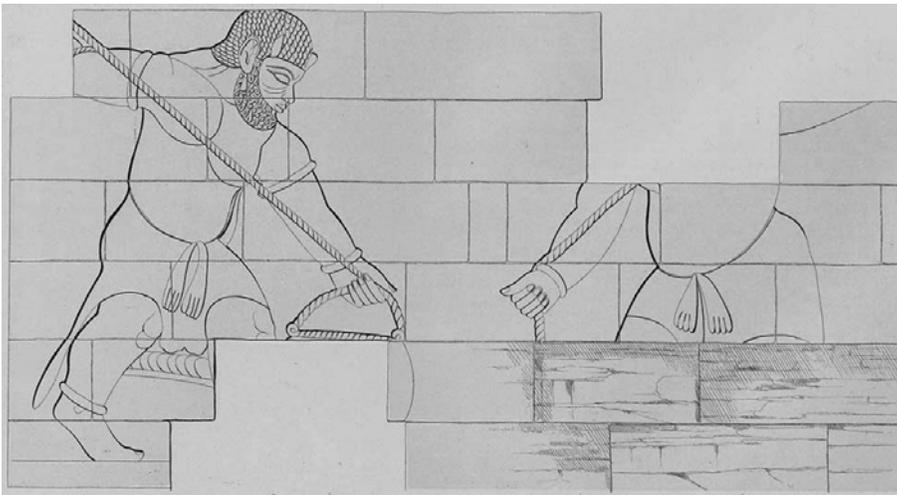


Figure 2. Relief depicting two Bes-Satyrs facing each other in the temple of Duanib-Wadi el-Banat, possibly mid-1st century AD (from Lepsius 1849-1859, V, pl. 68, f).

The importance of the buildings and objects bearing these iconographic elements suggests that their decorative programmes were not chosen by chance but were aimed at expressing the important concept of the contemporary royal ideology. Actually, a possible explanation of the programmatic importance given to Dionysiac elements in the representation of kingship at the time of Natakamani and Amanitore might lie in the relationships between Kush and Egypt after the Roman conquest of the kingdom of the Ptolemies. At that time, after the clashes between Rome and Kush, the Kushite support for the Upper Egyptian revolt of 30 BC, the expedition against Kush led by

Petronius, and the war ended by the peace treaty of Samos (Török 1997b, 448-454), the political and perhaps military tensions between Rome and Meroe might have continued for some time (Burstein 2004, 18-19). Perhaps these tensions might be related also to the well-known reconnaissance expedition sent by Nero and to his possible plans for a military campaign against Kush (Török 1988, 82; 1997b, 464; Desanges 1988, 14-16; De Nardis 1989). Actually, the continuation of a hostile attitude toward Rome is also confirmed by the triumphal temple M 292 at Meroe, decorated with scenes possibly showing Roman captives, which was rebuilt in this phase, most likely by Natakamani and Amanitore (Török 1997a, 148-150). In fact it seems that the bronze head of Augustus, which was intentionally buried near the entrance, can be safely dated on stylistic grounds after 25 BC, and, thus, it may have looted from a Roman official building after the war ended by the Roman campaign conducted by Petronius in 25-24 BC (Török 1997a, 150, n. 452; 1997b, 452-453, n. 246). In any case, even if we admit that the head of Augustus was looted in 25-24 BC, when it had just arrived at the southern fringes of the Roman Empire, its ritual burial and the representation of Roman captives in temple M 292 after the restoration possibly undertaken by Natakamani and Amanitore confirm a

hostile attitude towards Rome in the mid-1st century AD. Moreover, it seems that some military tensions continued also in the second half of the 1st century AD: a Greek papyrus of a Milanese collection, most likely a private letter, describes a conflict between Romans, Troglodytes, and Ethiopians, i.e. Kushites, which might date to this period (Eide *et al.* 1998, 932-935).

In such a political situation, the explicitly stated link between Dionysos and Apedemak, the patron of the king of Kush, could have assumed clear political anti-Roman meaning. Actually, the reaffirmation of a dynastic cult linked to the Ptolemies was clearly an act hostile to Egypt's new masters, most likely linked with possible anti-Roman parties

among the Greco-Egyptian population as well as to the expectations of the humbler strata of the Egyptian farmers (Foraboschi 1988, 823-826). In the framework of the Egyptianizing tendencies of the late Ptolemies, Anthony and Cleopatra posed as Dionysos-Osiris and Isis-Aphrodite (Cerfaux and Toundriau 1957, 215, 295-306; Darby Nock 1972, 147; Ahmed Etman 2003, 75-77; Becher 1965, 41-43; Jeanmaire 1924; Weill Goudchaux 2000, 115-116). Thus, Dionysos and his cult were clearly related to anti-Augustan policy and antithetic to the *restauratio morum* of Augustus and the early Julio-Claudian emperors, which was hostile to all foreign non-Roman and orgiastic cults, and in particular

to the Egyptian cults (Cerfaux and Toundriau 1957, 321-324, 332-337; Geraci 1988, 385-386, 393-398; Speyer 1976, 1781-1782, 1789, 1795-1798, 1803-1804; Becher 1965; J. H. C. Williams 2000, 138-141). Thus, from this point of view, the political value of the use of Dionysiac ideological elements by the Kushite king is very clear and evident in the case of the decoration of the façade of the palace of Natakamani at Jebel Barkal. When Natakamani built a new palace at Jebel Barkal as part of a systematic program of reconstruction of the sacred city, which was the largest royal intervention at that site after the region was ravaged by the Roman troops of Petronius, he decided to decorate it with glazed tiles stressing the links between the king, his traditional Meroitic patron Apedemak, and the god of the enemies of the Romans, i.e. Dionysos.

The adoption of religious and ideological elements originating in the Ptolemaic period during the reign of Natakamani and Amanitore is not limited to Dionysiac ones. On the contrary, this reign is characterized also by the presence of several other Egyptian Late Ptolemaic and Roman influences (Török 1997b, 463-464, 525-526). It was noted that the funerary chapels of Natakamani and Amanitore, as well as that of Prince Arikankharor, are characterised by an archaizing influence and, for the first time after the 3rd century BC King Arqamani, texts in Egyptian hieroglyphs are seen (Török 1997b, 465, 525).

In the same phase also other Hellenistic elements were introduced into the iconography associated with royal monuments. As already noted, in the decorative programme of the temple of Apedemak built by Natakamani and Amanitore at Naqa, Serapis was possibly represented (Gamer-Wallert 1983, 75-76, 93-94; Hofmann 1995, 2845, Abb. 21), and his possible assimilation with Apedemak was already suggested (Leclant 1973, 142-143; Gamer-Wallert 1983, 239-240). In the same temple, another enthroned male deity is characterized by a frontal representation of the head with sun rays (Gamer-Wallert 1983, 212-213, Bl. 11 a, Tav. 73, a). This solar deity was interpreted as Mithras, Helios-Sol or Sabazios (Zach 1993, 93; Hofmann 1995, 2842-2843; Gamer-Wallert 1983, 240).

The solar deity of Naqa can be compared with the well-known *en-face* representation of a solar deity in front of King Shorkaror, dating to the mid-1st century AD, at Jebel Qeili, in the Butana (Hintze 1959, 159; Zach 1993; Rostkowska 1982; Hofmann 1995, 2843). The deity of Jebel Qeili has also been tentatively identified with Apedemak because of his fertility and triumphal connotations (Zach 1993, 92; Rostkowska 1982, 290; Onasch 1984, 141, n. 2).

We can also wonder if these innovative iconographies at Naqa and Jebel Qeili can be interpreted in the light of what we suggested to explain the frequent use of the Dionysiac elements in association with Apedemak in the royal Kushite monuments of the mid-1st century AD.

In the ideological and political context of a systematic reference to the ideology of the Ptolemaic dynasty, the pres-

ence of Serapis in the decoration of the Apedemak temple at Naqa is not surprising: Serapis was a new god conceived by the first Ptolemies as a fertility god, patron of the dynasty, who could be worshipped both by the Greek and Egyptian populations living in their kingdom; moreover, he could also be identified with Dionysos (Cerfaux and Toundriau 1957, 212-215; Clerc and Leclant 1994b, 666, 1994a, 108; Sfameni Gasparro 2003; Darby Nock 1972, 140).

The solar deity of Naqa and Jebel Qeili can be linked to the solar ideological elements already clearly present in the representations of Ptolemy III and Ptolemy V as Aion-Osiris-Sarapis-Helios with a crown in the shape of solar rays on some coins (Lichocka 2003, 206, fig. 10-11; Tarn 1932, 147; Walker and Higgs 2000, 92-94, nos 104-105). In this case, the political meaning of the presence of the solar deity in Kush could be made even more evident by a specific reference to the latest phase of Ptolemaic rule, i.e. the period of the alliance with Marcus Antonius against Octavian. Actually, the sun with its rays were represented on some coins of Marcus Antonius associated with the portrait of the Roman general (Tarn 1932, 148) and the twins born from Marcus Antonius-Dionysos and Cleopatra VII-Isis were named Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene (Cerfaux and Toundriau 1957, 302-306; Ahmed Etman 2003, 75-77; Geraci 1988, 397; Tarn 1932, 144-147; Jeanmaire 1924, 250-251). Moreover, it should be noted that in the Roman Mediterranean Dionysos often assumed also the attributes of Helios-Sol and was considered as a triumphal deity reigning over the universe (Foucher 1981, 699-700; Ahmed Etman 2003, 75-77), and that also Serapis was assimilated to Helios-Sol (Clerc and Leclant 1994b, 667). The fact that in the mid-1st century AD Helios-Sol was considered a patron deity also by the Roman emperors Caligula and Nero (Cerfaux and Toundriau 1957, 342-347, 350-353; see also Zach 1993, 94), might have given to the Kushite rulers further reasons to include it in the ideological system legitimising their power and aspirations.

Thus, these innovative iconographies of Naqa and Jebel Qeili inspired by Serapis and Helios might be considered a part of the same programme of systematic recall of Ptolemaic ideology expressed by the association of Dionysos and Apedemak and aimed at presenting the Kushite kings as a legitimate alternative to the new Roman rulers of Egypt.

After this episode, in the reign of Natakamani and Amanitore, Dionysiac elements continued to be present in Kushite iconography and ideology, as already remarked upon by several scholars, but apparently not in the royal monuments. This fact might be related to the establishment of more peaceful relations with the Roman Empire. Moreover, after the first attempts under Caligula and Nero (Cerfaux and Toundriau 1957, 342-347, 350-353), the cult of Dionysos and of Sol was more accepted and important in Roman official imperial ideology at least from the early 2nd century AD (Foucher 1981, 700, see also Cerfaux and



Toundriau 1957, 359), and this fact deprived the Dionysiac and related elements in the Kushite royal ideology of their potentially anti-Roman meaning.

Again, as previously noted, wine amphorae and metal vessels possibly intended for wine consumption were present in royal and aristocratic tombs dating to the second half of the 2nd and of the 3rd centuries AD, demonstrating that the use of wine and possibly ideological elements related to Dionysiac cult continued to be present among the Kushite elite. The presence of such artefacts at Argin, Karanog, Gamai, and Sedeinga, and the distribution of other possible markers of Dionysiac cult outlined in recent works (Lenoble 2004; Scholz 1996; Sackho-Autissier 2002) show their spread also among the Lower Nubian Kushite elite in the phase of the progressive restoration of Kushite control of Lower Nubia and in the years preceding the withdrawal of the Roman frontier to Elephantine (Török 1988, 83-84; 1997b, 467-486). Moreover, slightly later, at the beginning of the 4th century AD, the Lower Nubian wine presses with their spouts shaped as lion protomes also suggest the production of wine in the region (Adams 1966, 262; Wenig 1978, 255, no. 191).

As previously stressed when examining the finds from el-Hobagi, it seems that this symbolism continued into the Post-Meroitic period both in Lower Nubia and Central Sudan. Lenoble (1999, 171-172, 174-175, 178, 180; 2004, 337-338) remarked that the same continuity could be noticed in elite funerary practices not only with regards to the use of Dionysiac symbols but also with regards to the practice of human and animal sacrifices, to the imperial triumphal symbols and to the practice of Osiriac/Isiac libations. If the above suggested explanation for the introduction and presence of Dionysiac elements in Meroitic royal ideology and the suggested link between Dionysos and Apedemak are accepted, these elements could be considered as fully integrated in the Meroitic royal triumphal ideology and, consequently, they could have been easily adopted jointly with all the other triumphal elements by the Post-Meroitic rulers.

Finally, it may be suggested that the presence of these Dionysiac elements in the Kushite kingdom might also have favoured the adoption of Dionysiac iconography and ideology further south. It has already been suggested that Dionysiac iconography played an important and organic part in royal Aksumite ideology since the late 3rd century AD (Manzo 1999a; 1999b, 129). Also in the Aksumite case a programmatic reference to the Ptolemaic ideology might be suggested, as the Aksumite kingdom assumed control of the Red Sea, which was previously controlled by the Ptolemies, but a legitimising reference to Kushite royal ideology cannot be excluded because in the late 3rd century AD the kings of Aksum were also increasingly involved in the Middle Nile area from the political and military point of view (Manzo 1999a, 360-361).

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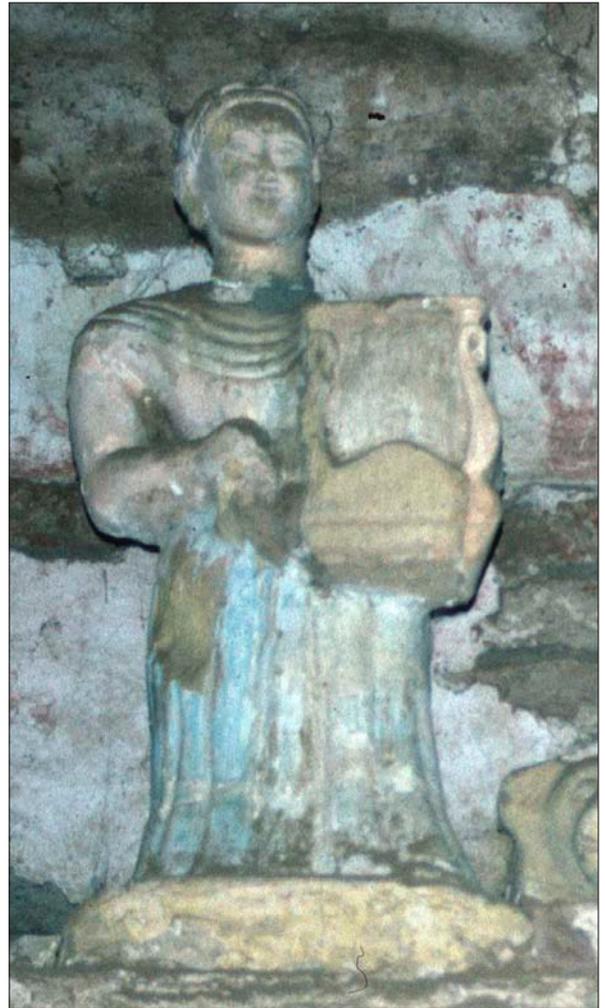
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Colour plate XXXVIII. Apedemak and Dionysos. Statues of a kitharedos from the 'water sanctuary' in Meroe, first phase, mid-3rd century BC (photo Derek A. Welsby)



Colour plate XXXIX. Apedemak and Dionysos. Glazed terracotta tile in the shape of a lion with a hmhm crown grasping a crescent, to be identified with the lion god Apedemak from the Palace of Natakamani (B 1500) at Jebel Barkal, mid-1st century AD (courtesy Loredana Sist).



Colour plate XL. Apedemak and Dionysos. Glazed terracotta tile depicting a Maenad holding raisins from the Palace of Natakamani (B 1500) at Jebel Barkal, mid-1st century AD (photo Rocco Ricci, © The British Museum)